



DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

New Road - Better Life

On August 11, residents of Medvec/Medvece officially opened the new asphalt road that provides some 100 school kids with better access to the school building. This is the second project to be dedicated in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality, supported by USAID's Municipal Infrastructure and Support Initiative (MISI).

Medvec/Medvece is a small mixed village of Albanians, Roma and Ashkali Kosovars in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality, but one of the first to establish a Community Working Group to work with MISI. The Community Working Group has worked hard to compete with other communities for funds and their advocacy capabilities ensured them additional funds from USAID for the road completion.

The total project cost was 82,652.90 euros, with the municipality contributing 14,652.90, 28,000 euros from USAID, and the Municipal Local Investment Fund contributing 40,000 euros. MISI is designed to assist communities and improve conditions for returns and reintegration of minorities through cooperative efforts of ethnic groups.

Three Pronged Anti-Trafficking Plan Launched for Kosovo

The Kosovo Advisory Office on Good Governance launched the "Kosovo Action Plan To Combat Trafficking in Human Beings" at a news conference on August 12 in Pristina. The Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) approved the plan on May 17, outlining steps to be taken in prevention of trafficking, protection of victims, and prosecution of traffickers, announced Habit Hajredini, director of the Office on Good Governance within the Office of the Prime Minister.

USAID's program to assist and reintegrate Kosovar victims of trafficking, implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), supported the news conference and the development of the plan along with other donors, including the Government of Finland. IOM worked with the Advisory Office on Good Governance, other ministries, local NGOs such as the Center for Protection of Women and Children, OSCE, UNMIK and many others to develop the plan. In April of this year, the program's survey on "Attitudes and Beliefs about Human Trafficking in Kosovo" provided insights into local opinions about the phenomenon.



Sevdije Ahmeti, Center for Protection of Women and Children, talks about the role of civil society in implementing the plan.

"Two of the statistics stand out in my mind as being particularly relevant to the work we are about to embark on," said Mario Lito Malanca, Senior Program Officer for IOM. "Among the 900 persons interviewed, only 9% believed that trafficking exists within Kosovo. And only 20% believed that trafficking victims are innocent or not to blame for their exploitation and therefore "deserve" to be reintegrated into society. These rather shocking results prove the necessity and potential impact of the activities foreseen by the Plan of Action."

ECONOMY

Tax Revenue demonstrates Tangible Benefits

On July 15th, Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director accompanied by Mr. Haki Shatri, Minister of Finance and Economy visited Prizren. The host, Mr. Eqrem Kryeziu, Mayor of Prizren introduced them to several community development projects implemented by using property tax revenue thus demonstrating tangible benefits of the tax collection in this municipality.

Though it is the second largest municipality in Kosovo, Prizren rates sixth on the tax collection scale, with 235, 768 euros collected for the first half of 2005. Municipal officials are working hard to improve the collection rate hoping that investment and projects implemented to date will increase public awareness regarding citizens' responsibilities toward their municipalities. USAID's Economic Development Initiative worked hard on the introduction of the property tax throughout Kosovo in 2003, which increased the autonomy and fiscal sustainability of Municipalities. Criteria for the certification of municipalities specify the identification of properties to be included in the

tax base, selection of criteria to value properties, setting a tax rate which may differentiate between properties by categories depending on the use and location of the property and establishing the administrative capacity necessary to carry out property information management, valuation, billing, collection, appeal and enforcement actions.

These efforts were successful and resulted in a total of 27 municipalities out of 30 being certified to be able to issue bills and collect taxes. The property tax is considered the most transparent and equitable approach to taxes on immovable property because it is proportionate to property value and the relative wealth of the taxpayer.

Human Capacity Development

Fourty-six staff members of the Treasury Department received certificates for completion of the Public Accounting Training organized by USAID's Participant Training Program. Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director presented the certificates at a ceremony organized on July 7th. The participants represented different units and divisions with the Treasury Department of the Ministry of Finance and Economy. The training was conducted by the Society of Certified Accountants and Auditors of Kosovo (SCAAK) and included instruction in modern accounting systems, standard accounting codes, classifications and terminology. This course provided a foundation for future, advanced-level trainings.

These trainings are organized through USAID's Human Capacity Development program, which supports USAID's assistance to the creation of a stable economy with strong institutions, and an environment that encourages private sector growth and productive investment that is sustainable and well-functioning.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Extending hybrid variety plants

Twenty-two Kosovar Serb farmers, several input supply dealers, representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD), and Gjilan/Gnjilane Municipal officials participated in a plot presentation day.

The presentation of corn (maize), soya beans, sunflower and alfalfa plots was organized by Kosovo Dealers of Agro-Inputs Association (KODAA) on August 10. The objective of the presentation was to test new hybrid varieties of feed grains.

The field tests showed that to date the new varieties far out-performed the local traditional varieties and in some cases possibly more than doubled production.

KODAA with assistance from USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support (KCBS) project has been conducting tests on new varieties of the feed grains Kosovo-wide. In order to assure that the hybrid crops produce to their maximum capacity, the test plot activity included farmer instruction on proper methods of fertilizer formulation and crop protection. The farmers at the Gjilan/Gnjilane test plot were clearly impressed by the considerably increased size of the new hybrid variety plants and the potential for much bigger yields. In the fall, after the test plots have been harvested, the farmers will be provided with specific yield and cost data.

Kosovo producers look at milk for mozzarella (and more)

Two milk collecting cooperatives and their local dairy processor achieved new successes in milk quality/quantity and are starting production of new cheeses in Kosovo. The short-term activity with cooperatives in Shtime/Stimlje and Lipjan/Lipljan is part of USAID's Kosovo Cluster and Business Support (KCBS) project, implemented by Chemonics.

Members of the cooperatives learned better hygiene techniques after simple lab tests showed that 75 percent of 105 cows had mastitis, and were producing poor quality milk, though producers did not believe they had problems. The local cooperative managers were led through an analysis of milk quality, projecting prices if the two lowest quality milk deliveries were rejected. Such a change could increase the price received by all other members for their pooled milk by 1 euro cent per liter - a clear demonstration of the benefit of better cow hygiene and improved milk quality.

Additionally, the project worked with a dairy local processor, Rona, from Ferizaj/Urosevac, to develop new cheeses, a high moisture pizza mozzarella and ricotta cheese and helped strengthen their working relationship with the cooperatives.

Upcoming Events

August 22, Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Mission Director will tour the Trepca Mines, in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica

August 23, Dr. Ken Yamashita, USAID/Kosovo Director will dedicate an infrastructure project in Medvec/e, Obiliq/c municipality



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